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THE LORD'S SUPPER,

BY

REV. THOS. E. PECK, D. D.

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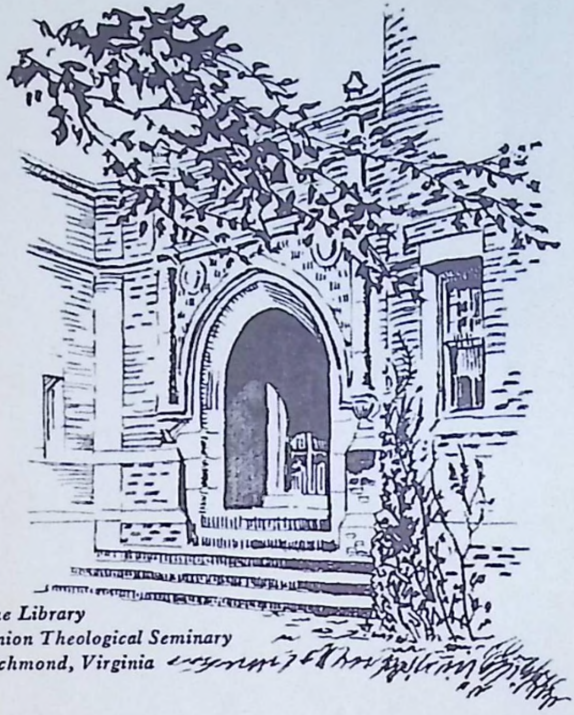

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THE LORD'S SUPPER.

IN the remarks which we propose to make upon this subject, we have in our view the needs of the great body of private members of the Church rather than the needs of the ministers of the gospel; although we are not without hope of being able to say something which may serve to impart additional clearness to the views of some ministers who have not made the subject a matter of special study. Observation and experience have convinced us that there is not a little confusion, if not some error, in the notions entertained by many intelligent Presbyterians in regard to the nature and design of this ordinance, and to the mode in which it conduces to the sanctification of believers. Fatal errors in regard to it were taught in the Church for ages; and so inveterate have these errors become, so thoroughly

had they poisoned the life of Christians, that even the great men who were raised up by Divine Providence, and employed as its instruments in the work of reform in the sixteenth century, failed to reach any harmony of views among themselves concerning it; and an ordinance which had been established by the Saviour as the most impressive symbol of the union and communion of His people, became the occasion of bitter contentions and divisions. Its mission, like the mission of the Redeemer Himself, seemed to be that of bringing a sword, not peace, on the earth. The history of the Church scarcely records anything better suited to humble us, and make us distrustful of our unaided understandings, than the debates at the colloquy of Marburg, and especially the obstinate weakness of Luther in defending a position as utterly untenable as that of the Papists themselves. The cask preserves the odor of the first liquor that is put into it; and the error of Luther still lingers in the noble Church which has been called by his name. But are Presbyterians free from error in regard to this

ordinance? Their doctrinal standards are, as we believe; but we also believe that the ghosts of the departed errors of Popery still linger about the communion table even in our own Church. This is our apology, if apology be needed, for the present writing.

We have in the New Testament four several accounts of the institution of the Supper. The last of these is found in the eleventh chapter of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians; and being the last in the order of time, as well as the most complete, it was doubtless designed by the Saviour to be the chief directory for the Church in celebrating this ordinance. So the instinct of the Church seems to have decided; and we shall be guided in what follows by this directory.

I. In the first place, it must be borne in mind that this ordinance was instituted by the Lord Himself. "For I have received of the Lord," says the apostle, "that which also I delivered unto you," (verse 23). It is no ordinance of man, but an ordinance of God in Christ. It is a *positive* institution, not *moral;* that is, the obli-

gation to observe it rests not upon "the nature of things"—the nature of God, the nature of man, or the relations of God and man as modified by the gospel, - but upon the sovereign appointment of God. Given a knowledge of the gospel and of those new relations which the death of our Lord Jesus Christ has constituted betwixt Him and us redeemed sinners, then the obligation to remember His death, with the liveliest emotions of gratitude, faith, and repentance, immediately arises and suggests itself. The relations cannot be recognized, without feeling the obligation. This is the *moral* side of the matter. But to remember Him and commemorate His death in this particular method—to wit, by assembling before a table, and eating bread and drinking wine together,—would never have suggested itself to us in the way of duty. No obligation would have been felt, and none would have existed. But the moment the command is given—"Do this in remembrance of Me"—the obligation arises. It is created by the command. This is the *positive* side of the matter.

There are some inferences of immense importance to be drawn from this fact, that our Lord by His own sovereign will ordained this feast.

1. If it be an expression of His sovereign will—and no reason exists for celebrating the Supper but the bare command,—then a refusal to go to the Lord's table involves the guilt of *rebellion*. Rebellion differs from other crimes in this, that, while other crimes are transgressions of particular laws or commandments, this crime is aimed at the very source of all law, the authority itself upon which all law rests, and by which alone it can be enforced. Murder may be committed by one who is thinking of nothing but the gratification of a private purpose or impulse of cupidity, lust, ambition, or revenge; but rebellion is always an attempt to subvert the government itself, or, at the very least, a denial of allegiance to it. Such was the crime of our first father in Eden. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was of the nature of a positive institution. The prohibition, "Thou shalt not eat of it," and that alone, created the difference between it and

the other trees of the garden, as to man's right of enjoyment. It was the expression and the symbol of God's sovereign right to control His creature. To eat of the fruit of that tree, therefore, was to deny that sovereign right, and to say as plainly as an act could say, "I will not have this God to rule over me." It was not the transgression of a single commandment; but a comprehensive repudiation of man's whole allegiance, an exhaustive denial of God's right to issue any command at all. So here: the refusal to obey this command, "Do this in remembrance of Me," on the part of any one who understands the case, is equivalent to a rejection of the whole authority of Jesus Christ. It is a very solemn and emphatic way of saying, "I will not have this man to reign over me." Let this be pondered by those who say that they can be as good Christians out of the visible Church as in it.

2. If this ordinance be a symbol of Christ's supreme authority in the Church—and there is no valid reason for observing it but His command—it will follow that he who goes to the Lord's ta-

ble, with the consciousness of being impelled, only or mainly, by the desire to obey Him, to remember Him and His death, in the way that He Himself has appointed, has good reason to look for a blessing. His obedience as such, will be rewarded. We do not mean that a mere mechanical compliance with the law of this ordinance, or of any other, will entitle a man to receive a blessing; much less are we believers in what has been called in the Papacy the *opus operatum*, that the sacraments produce their appropriate effects whenever administered, unless some bar is opposed to prevent their operation. Our meaning is that, beside the effects which an ordinance is adapted in its own nature to produce, a special manifestation of God's favour may be expected to follow the essential spirit of obedience itself; and that where this spirit of obedience exists, the other effects, which have been alluded to, may be more confidently expected to take place. To illustrate: the memorials of a Saviour's broken body and of His blood shed, are adapted by a law of our nature to awaken cer-

tain emotions and to call into exercise certain spiritual faculties or habits, such as love, gratitude, faith, repentance, etc.; and this awakening and exercise might take place in the heart of a sincere believer (a Quaker, for instance), when the divine institution of the ordinance was not clear to his own mind, or even when it was clear to him that it was not of divine institution, but was only a pleasant ceremony of purely human origin. What we contend for is that such a believer would not be entitled to expect as large a blessing as another who should come with a full assurance that it was Christ's own ordinance he was coming to, and that he was coming because he believed it to be Christ's.

3. This view is important, further, as helping to settle the question, in a given case, whether a person ought to go to the communion. If it were a mere question of privilege, one ought perhaps to wait for absolute assurance of his right. But if it be a question of duty, then a lower degree of evidence ought to convince him that he is bound to perform it.

II. It is a *teaching* ordinance: it is designed to set forth some fundamental doctrines of the gospel. All teaching is by signs. The two kinds of signs which God chiefly employs in teaching us are words and symbols. Words, indeed, are symbols in a certain sense; but they are here distinguished as a class of signs differing from symbols. Words are, in their origin, signs addressed to the sense of hearing. A word is a *vox;* and if it be not a sign also, it is a *vox et præterea nihil.* The written word is simply the record of these signs; as written, appealing, no doubt, to the sense of sight, but appealing remotely to the ear. Symbols appeal to the eye mainly. In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, we have the record of a discourse of our Saviour, in which He announced to the people the same great truths which are set forth in the Lord's Supper. (See especially verses 35, 48–58.) The comparison of that discourse with 1 Cor. xi. 24–26, will give us a clear idea of the difference between teaching by words and by symbols. In the one, the Lord appears as describing the sac-

rifice which He was to offer for the sins of the world, and the method by which that sacrifice should become effectual for the life of the sinner. In the other, the Lord appears as actually presenting His flesh to His people under the symbol of bread, and they appear as actually receiving and eating it. (Compare John vi. 51–58 with 1 Cor. xi. 24.) It is the same truth in both; but in the one case conveyed in the language of words—words in the highest degree figurative, but still words; in the other, conveyed in the form of symbolical elements and actions. Considering the Supper as a system of signs, its whole value lies in the truths which it presents and exhibits.*

Now, note one or two important inferences from this view:

* We have taken for granted, it will be observed, the common Protestant interpretation of the words, "This is My body;" this is the sign of, or this represents My body. This is not the place for exposing the absurdities of the Papal doctrine of transubstantiation—a doctrine fatal to all rational belief in the Bible as the word of God, and the mother of the most desolating scepticism.

1. There is no special mystery about this ordinance. It began to be called a "mystery," a "tremendous mystery," in the Church so early as the middle of the second century; and as words react mightily on thought, men began to think that there must be a mystery in it; and as they could not find any, it became necessary to put some into it. Hence, the very word "Sacrament," which meant mystery;* hence the doctrine of the "Real Presence" in all its forms. If this simple memorial of Christ's death could not be made a miracle for the senses, it must at least become a mystery for faith. Something must be put into it to justify the extravagant language which was commonly employed in regard to it.

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*The Latin version of the Bible, which goes under the name of "The Vulgate," commonly uses the word *sacramentum* to represent the Greek word *mystery*; and the English reader, by substituting "sacrament" for "mystery," in Ephesians v. 32, will understand how ignorant people might be made to believe that the Bible makes marriage a sacrament.

The mystery is not in the ordinance. How men can be taught by the use of visible signs and symbols, it is not harder to understand than how they can be taught by words. Not as hard, perhaps. The mystery is in the truth, not in the vehicle; the mystery of the incarnation, of "God manifest in the flesh"; the mystery of grace, condescension, and love, in the Saviour's death; the mystery of the believer's vital union with his Saviour; the mystery of glory, when that life, which is now "hid with Christ in God," shall be revealed in the revelation of Christ, "our life;" all these mysteries are real and ineffable. But they may be and are set forth in the preaching of the word, as well as in the Supper. Is there any mystery in preaching?

2. This view furnishes an answer to the question how the Lord's Supper conduces to the sanctification of believers. The answer is, by the truth it sets forth. Its operation is not physical. Men ate the manna in the wilderness, and died the death of the body. Men have eaten the bread of the Supper, and have died

the death, both of the body and of the soul. Its operation is not magical; its effects are not like those ascribed to the wizard; the words of institution are not an incantation. All such notions are the dreams of drivelling superstition, or the devices of an ambitious and avaricious priesthood, unsupported by any evidence, and in the highest degree insulting to God. There is too much reason to fear that there are remains of this superstition lingering in the minds of some Christians who are far from deserving to be described as superstitious.

The truth is the only instrument that God uses for the sanctification of His people (John xvii. 17; 2 Thess. ii. 13; James i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 22–25; ii. 1, 2); while His Holy Spirit is the only sanctifier. Peter, in the passage just cited, compares the Word of God to the seed which determines the nature of the life and all its manifestations. Paul uses (Rom. vi. 17) the figure of a mould or type to express the relation of the life of a believer to the truth—"that form of doctrine whereto ye were delivered" (see the

rendering in the margin). The metal must be fused, in order to take the impression of the mould; the wax must be softened, in order to take the impression of the seal. This softening and fusing of the heart is the work of the Holy Spirit alone. He alone gives the life, and He alone invigorates and developes it; but He imparts it and developes it, according to the truth, as recorded in the Scriptures, and symbolized in the sacraments. It is as easily understood, therefore, how the sacraments conduce to our sanctification as how the reading or preaching of the Word does. There is a great mystery in the Spirit's operations (John iii. 8), both by word and sacraments; but the mystery is not greater when He works by the latter than when He works by the former.

There are two circumstantial differences, however, which it may be well to note in passing:

(1.) The truths presented in the sacrament, especially in the Lord's Supper, are presented in a more condensed form than in the Word. The light in the old creation, to borrow an illustra-

tion from Owen, was sufficient to illuminate the world, while it was diffused everywhere before the work of the fourth day; but it was more glorious and penetrating when reduced and contracted into the body of the sun. So the truth concerning Christ, scattered up and down the Bible, is sufficient for the illumination of the Church; but it is far more glorious when reduced and contracted into the Lord's Supper. All the rays of Christ's glory are here converged, as it were, into one burning focus, and consequently better suited to set the soul of the believer on fire.

(2.) The other difference is that, in the Supper, the power of the truth is increased by the active part which the communicant takes in the celebration of the ordinance. There are symbolical actions, as well as symbolical elements, used in the Lord's Supper. The action of the administrator in offering the elements to the communicants is symbolical of the free offer of Jesus and all the benefits of His redemption to those who will truly receive them. "Take, eat," etc. The action of the communicants in taking

the elements and in eating and drinking them is symbolical of their reception of Jesus and the benefits of His redemption. In reading or hearing the Word, there is no profession made as to the state of mind and heart of the reader or hearer. In the act of communicating, there is a profession made of receiving and resting upon Him, whose body and blood are symbolically offered to them; and, by a law of human nature, when such a profession is sincerely made, the truth is brought nearer to the soul of him who makes it, and is in more favorable conditions for making an impression.

We come now to consider more particularly what the truth is, which is symbolized in the Supper. "My body broken for you" (verse 24); "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." (Matt. xxvi. 28. Compare Mark xiv. 25; Luke xxii. 20.) The fundamental truth here set forth is the substitution of Jesus for the sinner, of His life for the sinner's. This was the theory of the bleeding sacrifice under the Mosaic law.

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement (Hebrew, *covering*,) for your lives; for it is the blood that maketh a covering by the life that is in it." (Fairbairn's rendering; see his "Typology.") Life is substituted for life; the life of the victim for the life of the sinner, which has been forfeited to the law; the life of the victim becoming thereby a covering for the forfeited life of the sinner; and hence an at one-ment,* a bringing into one, a reconciliation of God and the sinner—these are the great ideas set forth in this precious ordinance of the Church, ideas without which the gospel is but

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*Atonement is here used in its proper etymological sense of *reconciliation*, expressing the result of an expiatory offering rather than the process of expiation itself. This last is the ordinary acceptation of the word, and that in which our authorized version of the Bible uses both noun and verb, with rare exceptions. One of these exceptions is in Romans v. 11, where the Greek word rendered "atonement" means *reconciliation*, and is so rendered by our translators in the margin.

"the play of Hamlet without the part of Hamlet."

The great purpose of the ordinance is to set forth the death of Christ. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew (announce, proclaim) the Lord's death till He come," (verse 26).

We are so familiar with this simple rite that we are not as much impressed as we should otherwise be with the strangeness of it. Men are accustomed to celebrate the birth-days of great benefactors of their country or their race. Their death days have been lamented and deplored as putting a permanent arrest upon their beneficent career. "In that very day their thoughts perish." The death-days of the Christian martyrs were celebrated by their brethren with appropriate ceremonies; but they were celebrated as their *natalitia*, their birth-days, upon which they entered into glory, honour, and immortality. It must be borne in mind also, that these days of martyrdom could never have been celebrated if Jesus had not died; that His death

alone made them birth-days into glory. The death of Manes was celebrated by the Manichæans; but it was no doubt in impious imitation of the Church's festival.

But the death of Jesus is not only celebrated by the Church, that vast communion of His worshippers, but celebrated as a festival, as a feast of thanksgiving, as a Eucharist. How strange! There must be something very unique about this death; some quality or feature in which it refuses to communicate with any other death which has ever occurred amongst men. What is it? The answer is that the death of Jesus was to Him what the death of no other man could ever be to that man—the very end and purpose of His birth. Jesus was born for the express purpose of dying. His body was prepared (Psalm xl. 6; Heb. x. 5) in order that it might be broken; His blood was made to flow in its channels, in order that it might be shed. It is indeed "appointed unto all men once to die"; but this is not the end for which they were created. But the body of Jesus was created for

this end (see John x. 18). This was the commandment or commission of the Father, that the Son should come into the world and take a human life, in order that he might lay it down, and then take it again. Upon the supposition that Jesus was a mere man and a mere martyr, this passage of John is utterly unintelligible. If He came into this world, as some monk of St. Bernard might go out among the snows of the Alps, not for the purpose of offering up His life, but only at the risk of losing it, in the prosecution of His benevolent mission, then the gospel history is an insoluble riddle. No! no! He was indeed the wisest of all teachers, the most illustrious of all the martyrs of philanthrophy; but He was infinitely more: the great High Priest, performing a sublime and noble act of worship in the offering up of Himself a sacrifice to divine justice for the glory of the Father and the salvation of the lost. The Unitarian would place Him in the same class with Paul. Paul is indignant at the outrage done to his Master. "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the

name of Paul?" In the esteem of that great apostle, Jesus stood alone, in solitary glory, the Saviour of sinners. The only glory Paul claimed was that of preaching the unsearchable riches of this Saviour "without charge" to His fellow sinners. (1 Cor. ix. 15–23).

The death of Jesus, then, was not a mere incident in His history, which might or might not have taken place, and yet the religion He taught have remained the same. It constitutes, together with His resurrection from the dead, the very *essence* of His religion. So Paul, in 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, sums up the religion which he preached; and it is a true instinct which has led the Church to regard the Supper as her most significant symbol and ensign. Around it her fiercest battles have been fought, both with avowed enemies and with pretended friends.

This view explains the impotence, the confessed impotence, of the Papacy to give peace to its deluded votaries. It has taken away from the laity the cup, the symbol of the blood, and and it virtually denies the efficacy of the Sa-

viour's death by the *repetition* of His sacrifice (Heb. x. 1–4, 11–14) in the abomination of the Mass. Compare now the views of one of its "saints," who died more than a century before transubstantiation became the established dogma within its domain, and more than three centuries before the "communion in one kind," became the established dogma. In a direction for the visitation of the sick which is ascribed to St. Anselm of Canterbury, we have the following:*

"Dost thou believe that thou canst not be saved but by the death of Christ? The sick man answereth, Yes; then let it be said to him, Go to, then, and whilst thy soul abideth in thee, put all thy confidence in this death alone; place thy trust in no other thing, commit thyself wholly to this death, cover thyself wholly with this alone, cast thyself wholly on this death, wrap thyself wholly in this death. And if God would judge thee, say, Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Thy judgment; and otherwise I will not contend nor enter into judgment with Thee. And if He shall say unto thee that that thou art a sinner, say, I place the death of our Lord

*Cited by John Owen, Treatise on Justification, Sec. 2. Works (Russell's Ed., London, 1826). Vol. XI. p. 22.

Jesus Christ between me and my sins. If He shall say unto thee, that thou hast deserved damnation; say, Lord I put the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between Thee and all my sins; and I offer His merits for my own, which I should have, and have not. If He say that He is angry with thee, say, Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Thy anger."

He who, by an unction from the Holy One, (1 John ii. 20) knows this death, can afford to despise the "extreme unction" administered by a juggling priest, *in articulo mortis*.

The peculiar efficacy of the blood of Jesus is indicated by calling it "the blood of the new covenant." The new covenant suggests an old. Blood was the life of all the covenants before Christ, from Abel down. With which of these old covenants does the Saviour tacitly compare the covenant sealed with His own blood when He calls it the "new" covenant? Evidently the covenant of redemption, which was sealed with the blood of the paschal lamb, as recorded in the twelfth chapter of Exodus. This is the most natural supposition under the circumstances.

The Saviour was at this very time celebratin the feast of the Passover with His disciples The Passover covenant was that which then oc cupied their thoughts. The Sinaitic covenan was more a covenant with the Church as re deemed than a covenant for its redemption; : covenant for the nurture and sanctification o pardoned sinners rather than a covenant for the pardon of sins; although the fact that it also was sealed and ratified with blood shows that the great idea of expiation was not suffered to drop out of the memory. A bloody sacrifice for expiation must continue for ever to be the ground of all communion of even redeemed sin ners with God. That the Passover covenant is referred to by the Saviour is further manifest from 1 Cor. v. 7: "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us."

Such being the reference, the blood being the blood of redemption, the people of God are reminded of the great truths, (1) That they needed to be redeemed. All Israel by nature were in the same condemnation with the Egyptians.

he sovereign election of God and the blood ade the only difference. (2) That this redemption was to be accomplished—(*a*) by a work of ghteous judgment upon the serpent's seed ompare Ezek. xxix. 3 ff ; Rev. xii. 3 ; xiii. 1, ; 1 John iii. 8); and (*b*) by the suffering of the oman's seed typified in the lamb. (3) That he efficacy of the expiation for the salvation of he seed of God depended upon its being sprinkled," which could only be done by *faith*.

All this may be readily applied to the redemption achieved by Jesus. There is one important ifference, however, between the blood of the aschal lamb and the blood of "the lamb of God" with regard to their efficacy. There was o intrinsic power in the blood of the paschal amb to protect the house of an Israelite. The ife of no mere animal is an equivalent for the ife of man. The efficacy, therefore, was due nly to the sovereign appointment of God. Far ifferent is the efficacy of the blood of Him who through the eternal Spirit (or, by an eteal Spirit—*i. e.*, by means of a divine nature—com-

pare Rom. i. 4) offered Himself without spot to God." It is real and intrinsic, so that if we could separate (which is not possible) the offering of Jesus from the appointment of God, it would still be efficacious to "purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God," in the case of every sinner who should trust in it. (See the argument of the Apostle in Heb. ix. 13, 14, where the whole force of the "how much more" lies in the fact of the intrinsic efficacy of the blood of Christ.) It is impossible that the soul which has been sprinkled with His blood should ever be lost, not only because God says it shall not be, but because "the nature of things" forbids it, the nature of God, the nature of Jesus, the nature of His priesthood, the nature of His sacrifice. Truly we have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us (Heb. vi. 18). All this is confirmed by the fact that the believer is made a partaker of the life of Christ. The Israelites ate the flesh of the paschal lamb; but there was no commu-

nity of life between them and the lamb. But there is a real community of life between the believer and his Lord. He lives in the believer by His Spirit, and the believer lives in Him by faith; is a member "of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones;" (Eph. v. 30, and compare John vi. 53–58). This is a great mystery; as real and glorious as it is incomprehensible—the union of Christ and His Church.

Another comforting inference to be drawn from this reference to the covenant for redemption out of Egypt, is that the safety of the believer depends wholly upon the sprinkled blood, and not upon his personal character; though it is true that the believer has been sanctified also. We are strongly tempted here to quote, in illustration of this point, more than one eloquent paragraph from Dr. Stuart Robinson's "Discourses on Redemption," (Discourse 5). But, as we take pleasure in believing that this precious volume is very widely circulated, we shall content ourselves with a single paragraph:

"Here is a genuine child of faithful Abraham,

who has sometimes obtained a glimpse of the great truth involved in the shed blood, and experienced, in view of it, inexpressible comfort and peace. But the weakness of the flesh, and the temptations of sin, and the harassing cares of life have overshadowed his spiritual vision, and hidden the light from his view. The remembrance of many a sin returns and sits heavily upon his conscience, and thereby darkens his views of the great doctrine of the atonement for sin. But still, at the command of Jehovah, through Moses and the elders, he prepares the lamb, and sprinkles the blood. Yet as the shades of night thicken, and all are waiting in anxious suspense for the blow of vengeance and of deliverance, imagination is busy, and fears and terrors, as dark spirits, rise from the depths of the soul. And now unbelief suggests, in view of the array of past sins which memory parades before him, 'Can a little blood, sprinkled on the doorpost, blot out *such* sins?' Can the mere acceptance of such a call and command from Jehovah purge the conscience of such guilt? However

this blood might avail for the sins of the poor wretch who, under the burden of transgression, cries out, for the first time, to Jehovah, in his distress—yet, can it avail for one who hath proved faithless to vows, and buried out of sight his very covenant, under a multitude of transgressions? O thou of little faith! hast thou not listened to the promise? He said not—'when I find a tenement wherein there is no sin, I will pass over.' Nor—'when I find one who has, on the whole, not gone far astray, I will pass over.' Nor—'when I find a strong and active faith like Abraham's, I will pass over'—but, 'When I SEE THE BLOOD, I WILL PASS OVER.'"

Here a difficulty may be raised. We can understand, it may be said, how all the Israelites could be "passed over" if they had the blood upon the door-posts, no matter what their personal character might be; how Korah, Dathan, and Abiram could be as safe as Moses himself; for this was a redemption from mere temporal death. But surely we cannot assert that the

blood of Jesus confers safety from the stroke of eternal death in the same way. We answer that the bondage from which the blood of Jesus delivers is the bondage of sin, the bondage of its curse and of its dominion in the soul; and wherever there is true faith in His blood, there is deliverance from the dominion as well as from the guilt of sin. The deliverance from its guilt is absolute and perfect, and is the same in all believers, and the same at the moment they first believe, in degree and in kind, as at the bar of God when they shall be "openly acknowledged and acquitted." There are, and, from the nature of the case, can be, no degrees in justification; for the meritorious ground thereof is the righteousness of Christ imputed. To that glorious righteousness nothing can be added, and he who is clothed with it is as fully justified as the Saviour Himself is. But in sanctification there are degrees—all degrees from the first blush of dawn to the splendors of the noon-day. Our *title* to the heavenly inheritance, if we be true believers, is absolutely perfect from the mo-

ment we believe; our *fitness* for the inheritance is a thing of growth. The two, however, cannot be separated. Wherever there is any true faith in a sinner, there we find a man who is both justified and sanctified. Still, the safety of the man is found in his justification, and that depends upon the blood (Rom. iii. 24, 25; v. 9); and, as all believers are equally justified, they are all equally safe. The sensible evidence of the justification may and does vary, according to a variety of circumstances, and, among these circumstances, the degree of sanctification; but the justification is the same in all, and consequently the safety from the stroke of death. Hence, when the question is, Are we safe from the stroke of the destroyer? let our eye be fixed upon the blood! Let us "take ten looks at Christ for one at ourselves!"

III. The Supper is a *sealing* ordinance. By this is not meant that it makes an impression upon the soul as the seal upon the wax. This belongs to it as a sign or system of signs, as presenting the truth to our minds. This has been

already explained and guarded; and the sovereign agency of the Holy Ghost as the only sanctifier and comforter has been emphatically asserted. The meaning is that this sacrament, like that of baptism, is a seal appended to the gospel, the charter of our salvation, for the purpose of confirming to our weak faith the promises of God (see Rom. iv. 11; Acts ii. 38, 39; Heb. vi. 16–18). We are all familiar with the use of seals for a similar purpose among men (Gen. xxxviii. 18, 25; Jer. xxxii. 10, 11, 12, 14, 44).* God has given us His word, His oath, His visible seals; so that it would seem to be impossible to doubt. When we handle the ele-

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*A peculiar and almost mysterious importance has always been ascribed by jurists to the great seal of England. "It is held that, if the keeper of the seal should affix it, without taking the royal pleasure, to a patent of peerage or a pardon, though he may be guilty of a high offence, the instrument cannot be questioned by any court of law, and can be annulled only by an Act of Parliament."—*Macaulay's History of England, Vol. IV. p.* 487; *Harper's Edition*, 1849.

ments of the Lord's Supper, we hold, as it were, Christ and His salvation in our hands; we see them, we feel them, we incorporate them with our very selves. If we believe the evidence of our senses, why should we doubt that Jesus and His salvation are ours?

On the other hand, by partaking of the Lord's Supper, the communicants seal their engagement to be the Lord's (Shorter Catechism, Question 94). This engagement is first made in baptism, and then solemnly renewed from time to time in the other sacrament (Confession of Faith, Chap. XXIX., § 1). In every celebration of this ordinance there is an exchange of seals between God and the believer (John iii. 33); a fresh ratification of the covenant of grace, in which God promises to be the Father and God of the believer, and the believer promises to be His son, and to render to Him the obedience of a son. It is a fresh pledge of God's faithfulness to us, and a fresh pledge of our faithfulness to Him.

It follows, from this view of the Supper as a seal, that it is valuable and valid only so long as

it is appended to the gospel charter. Cut off the seal from a human covenant or deed of conveyance, and it becomes utterly worthless It conveys nothing, it confirms nothing. Hence the worthlessness of the sacraments, so called, in the Papacy, which has virtually denied the fundamental doctrines of the gospel; and has so far laid aside the gospel as to make the sacraments the whole of religion.* According to its teaching, a sinner may be saved without knowing anything of the gospel, if he will only submit to the manipulations of the priest. It teaches that the sacraments not only signify grace, but convey it in every case in which a bar is not opposed to its operation. The sacraments, therefore, in the Papacy do all that the gospel can do, and a great deal more: they save the soul, which the gospel never does without them. The Bible teaches that the sacraments (with the ex-

* "By these (the sacraments) all true righteousness begins, or, being begun, is increased, or, being lost, is restored."—*Concil. Trident. Decretum de Sacramentis, Sess.* 7. *Proœmium.*

ception of baptism in its application to infants) are intended for the confirmation of faith in believers; Rome teaches that "by them all grace begins." Hence, no preaching is done, worth speaking of, in the Papacy, where it is the exclusive religion. The pulpit is almost as silent as the grave in Mexico and Colombia. They have cut off the seals and thrown away the charter; and, with the seals as magical charms, they pretend to work wonders which no eye can see. Let us guard against their fatal delusions, and bear in mind that the sacraments are only appendages to the gospel, and are utterly worthless without it. The sacraments are monuments without inscriptions, and their meaning and intent can only be known by the record.

IV. The Supper is a *commemorative* ordinance. "Do this in remembrance of Me." The idea of a commemoration is implied in a great deal of what has already been said in explaining the significance of the rite. We here consider it only as the commemoration of a great event, the death of Jesus Christ. In this

relation it belongs to the mass of proofs by which the facts of the gospel history are authenticated to us. The celebration of this festival can be traced back through all the centuries to the time when Jesus is affirmed to have died, and no further. The Church has always professed to celebrate it in commemoration of His death. The reality of that death is therefore indisputably established. A similar argument might be used to establish the reality of His resurrection from the observance of the first day of the week (Sunday) as a commemorative ordinance, though, for obvious reasons, this argument is not of equal strength with the other. But we may take this occasion to remark that the death and resurrection of the founder of Christianity are the only events in His history which God has commanded to be commemorated by the celebration of certain ordinances. All other commemorations are without authority, and tend only to impair the sense of obligation as to the observance of these two. In point of fact, the day of Christ's birth was not commemorated by

a Christmas for nearly four centuries after His birth. Further, the *anniversary* celebration even of the death and resurrection of Jesus is without authority, and seems inconsistent with the proprieties of the case as acknowledged by those branches of the Church which observe these anniversaries. Why celebrate once a year, on Good Friday, an event which they celebrate once a month, and even daily? Why celebrate once a year, on Easter, an event which they celebrate every week?

Again, the commemorative character of this ordinance furnishes an answer to the objection which is often felt without being uttered, that it is a bald and simple ceremony. Even in our ordinary human life, no other than a simple memento is needed of a dead or absent friend; a ring or a lock of hair is sufficient. We cannot help observing the difference in this respect between the Jewish economy and the Christian. If we have never seen and conversed with one whose character and office we have been taught to respect and love, we need a minute and cir-

cumstantial description of his person, his voice, his features, his gait, in order to recognize him when we see him. But, having seen him and conversed with him, a very simple memorial is sufficient to recall his image and to evoke from the depths of the heart the emotions which he was accustomed to inspire when actually present. So to the Church before His advent, a very minute description of the Christ was needful; and accordingly we find a complex system of symbols and types foreshadowing Him, His priestly, kingly, and prophetic offices, and the leading events of His history. But, to the Church since His advent in the flesh, these things are not needed; and the multiplication of ceremonies in the Christian Church is a melancholy proof of the decline of love to Him and of an eclipse of faith. We have indeed not seen the Saviour with our bodily eyes, but we have what is better (see John xvi. 7), the presence of the Holy Ghost, the "Paraclete," whose office it is to reveal Him to us, to take of His things and shew them to us, and so to glorify Him; (John xvi. 14). Where the

Church has a large measure of the Spirit it will feel that the simple memorial which Jesus instituted is enough; when the Spirit withdraws, and in proportion as He withdraws, the attempt will be made to compensate for His absence by ceremonial symbols which appeal to the senses and the imagination. We must walk either by faith or by sight. A life in the Spirit is a life of faith; a life without the Spirit is a life of sense. Hence the horrible perversion of the Supper in the Papacy. Jesus is not known by faith through the Spirit; and His very flesh and blood must be brought down under the "species" of bread and wine. Nominal Christians worship a wafer as their God!—an idolatry as brutal and senseless as that of the Israelites who worshipped a golden calf, which their own hands had made, as the God who had brought them out of Egypt.

The simplicity of the Supper is its recommendation. If it had a great intrinsic value, if it had any quality so charming or imposing as to fix the attention upon itself, there would be danger of its significance, Christ and His salvation,

dropping out of sight; the symbol would be in danger of usurping the place of the thing symbolized. The victors in the Grecian games were content with a wreath of laurel; the glory was not in the crown, but in the victory. The instinct of patriotism has chosen, as the flag of a country, a worthless piece of bunting, or, at the most, a piece of silk; and, when the flag is given to the breeze, it is not the beauty of the cloth or of its folds which makes the heart of the patriot swell and throb, but the thought of the country it represents, the institutions, the laws, the wisdom of the cabinet, the prowess of the field of battle, the blessings of home and fireside, in a word, the glory of the country and of its history. So the Christian of lively faith looks upon this simple ordinance of the Supper, the banner of the Church, and remembers with exultation the death by which death itself was slain, and the principalities and powers of darkness spoiled; he remembers the storms of fire and blood through which that banner has passed, and in which it has been held steadily and he-

ıroically aloft. He remembers the many in-
stances in which he has himself conquered by
this sign, or rather the many instances in which
the Saviour, whose death is there represented,
has, by the power of that death, given him the
victory. He looks upon it as the sure and cer-
tain pledge of final victory for the Church and
for himself.

V. This leads us to note the relation of the Supper to the second coming of our Lord, as suggested in the 26th verse: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death *till He come.*" This is not designed merely to fix the limit, in point of time, beyond which the ordinance is no longer to be observed. It does this; but why is the celebration to cease? Because then the whole work of redemption will have been accomplished; that which was virtually done when Jesus, upon the cross, cried, "It is finished" will have been actually done; the whole body of the redeemed will then be complete—complete as to its number and complete as to all the parts and effects

of redemption, the glorified spirit united with the glorified body, and the ransomed Church received with songs and everlasting joy upon its head into the marriage supper of the Lamb. Meantime, until the Church shall be blessed with that vision of her Lord, she is to celebrate and shew forth His death in the observance of the Supper as the pledge and earnest of His coming. As this ordinance is a proof that He did come once "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," so it is a pledge, that, having put away sin, "He shall appear the second time without sin, unto salvation, unto them that look for Him." There is a parallel here again between the paschal supper and this. The Passover was a commemorative ordinance, commemorative of a redemption; but it was also prospective in its character. It looked back to the redemption of the Church out of Egypt: it looked forward to the redemption achieved upon the cross, and further still, to that which Paul denominates "the redemption of the body." It is but one redemption throughout, in different

instalments, as there is but one Church in different stages and different forms of manifestation. Hence, every earlier instance of redemption is a pledge and earnest of the later and of the last. Hence, the Exodus out of Egypt, the death of the Lamb of God upon the cross, the advent of that Lamb again in glory, are all connected by an internal, moral, spiritual, and indissoluble bond. They constitute a golden chain like that in Rom. viii. 30. We need not be surprised, therefore, to find, in the vision of the rapt Seer of Patmos (Rev. xv.), "the song of Moses, the servant of God," as well as "the song of the Lamb," sung by the harpers on the glassy sea. The victories are the victories of the same Redeemer and for the same Church; and it is meet that the whole body of the redeemed should sing both songs.

The principles upon which this connexion of the different parts and stages of redemption rests are obvious enough. They are the immutability of God's nature, the immutability of His purposes and plan, and the necessary harmony and

consistency, of the parts of His plan. What He begins He will complete (Phil. i. 6), and He must always act like Himself. The Apostles Peter and Jude use the same kind of argument to prove, against the Universalists and scoffers, that there must be a final judicial discrimination between the righteous and the wicked (2 Peter ii. 4–9; Jude 5, 7). There has been: therefore there shall be. The arguments (many of them at least) used against the possibility of eternal punishment, if valid, would prove that God has never punished the wicked. But God has punished the wicked; therefore the arguments are not valid. They are dashed in pieces against the mountains of *facts*. So redemption is an accomplished fact, and the believer in Jesus may argue, with assurance, from the beginnings of redemption to its ultimate and glorious completion. The worthy communicant who sits down, with fear and trembling perhaps, at the Lord's table, shall as certainly sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb as it is certain that he lives.

VI. The mention of a "worthy" communicant suggests the last topic upon which the reader will be detained: the qualifications for communion. Read 1 Cor. xi. 27–32. (*a*) It is plain that there is a worthy and an unworthy eating and drinking in this ordinance, and hence that it is not for all persons. It is not a mere exhibition of the truth, as in the preaching of the word. It is a setting forth of the covenant with its seal; and those alone are entitled to communicate who are in covenant with God and cordially accept its promises and its conditions. (*b*) The worthiness does not consist in being perfectly free from sin. The table is spread for those who are still encompassed with bodies of sin and death, and who sigh for deliverance. (*c*) Nor does it consist in a strong faith. Faith which is as a grain of mustard seed, if it be indeed faith, may say to the mountain of sin, "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea," and it shall be done. The feeblest faith has its hold upon Christ, and therefore upon salvation; and the seals of salvation belong to it. The Lord has

babes in his family as well as adults; and Christ is the food for both – milk for the one, strong meat for the other. This is an ordinance for the nourishing of the weak as well as of the strong. The father is pleased with the stammering, inarticulate speech of the child in the arms which is not yet able distinctly to recognize its filial relation to him, as well as with the clear manly address of the full-grown son who rejoices in that relation. Given the adoption, whether clearly recognized or not, and the right to this ordinance exists. (*d*) Nor does it consist in entire freedom from doubt as to "being in Christ, or as to due preparation" for the ordinance. The Larger Catechism of our Church says (Question 172): "One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he is not yet assured thereof; and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity; in which case (be-

cause promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed, for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians), he is to bewail his unbelief, and labor to have his doubt resolved; and so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's Supper, that he may be further strengthened." (See the whole of the elaborate and admirable exposition in this Catechism, Questions 168–175.) (*e*) It consists in a knowledge of the Lord's body, an ability to discern and an actual discerning of that body (see verse 29). The word "discern" and its related words are several times used by the apostle in this context. Thus exactly the same word occurs again in verse 31, and is rendered in our version "judge." So also the simple verb in verse 32, and the corresponding noun in verse 29 (unhappily rendered "damnation" in our version, as the reading is "judgment," which is given in the margin. Compare the corresponding verb, in the first clause of verse 32).

The dominant idea in verses 27–32 is that of judging and discerning, or discriminating. This

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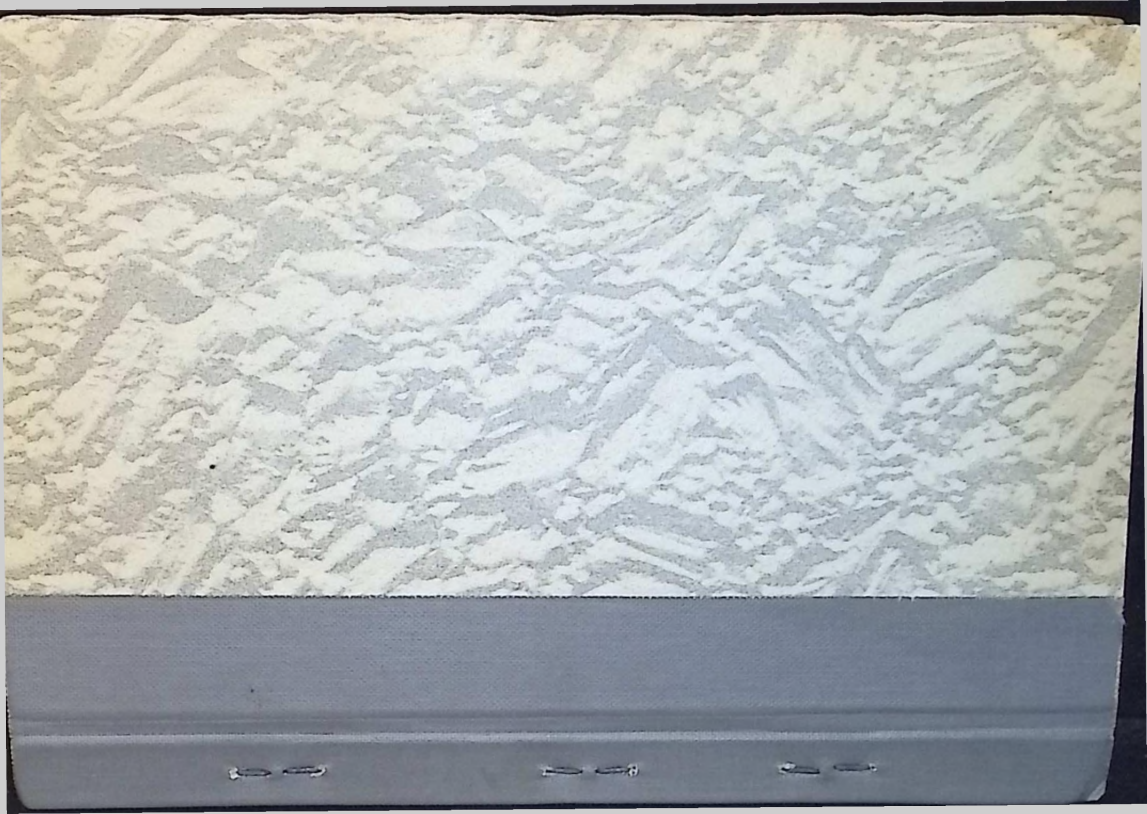
process is twofold, so far as the determination of our right to the Lord's table is concerned—(1) A judgment as to the Lord's body (verse 29); that this feast is no common meal, at which men are to satisfy their natural hunger, much less to drink themselves drunk (see verse 21); that it is a solemn act of worship; that this body of Jesus is to be "discriminated" from every other human body that was ever made in this, that it was made for the express purpose of being offered in sacrifice to God, for expiation and propitiation. (See the exposition given in the preceding part of this article). (2) A judgment of ourselves (verse 31, and compare verse 28 and 2 Cor. xiii. 5): "of our being in Christ; of our sins and wants; of the truth and measure of our knowledge, faith, repentance, love to God and the brethren, charity to all men; of our desires after Christ, and of our new obedience" (Larger Catechism, Question 171). As the observance of the Lord's Supper is a reasonable service, nothing less can be demanded of a communicant than a state of mind and heart corresponding

with the truth exhibited in its elements and actions—a state of mind and heart which may be comprehensively described as one of faith.

A worthy eating and drinking is an eating and drinking by faith. Faith is the mouth by which the flesh and blood of the Saviour are received. (John vi. 35, 40, 53–57; Confession of Faith, Chap. XXIX., Art. VII.) He must be received as He is exhibited and offered, and in no other way. If He is exhibited and offered as a perfect satisfaction to divine justice for human guilt, as an expiatory sacrifice which has met all the demands of the law, as an exemplary sacrifice also, illustrating the spirit of true obedience to the Father, a spirit of absolute self-renunciation for the glory of God and the good of man; then, in order to be worthy communicants, it is indispensable that we should have some apprehension of the justice of God, of the malignity of our guilt as sinners, of the necessity of satisfaction; that we should have some sympathy with the spirit of Jesus, some readiness to deny ourselves for the glory of God and the good of man. He

who does not feel himself to be guilty of death, and who does not long to be holy, cannot be a worthy communicant

Saving faith in Jesus Christ receives and rests upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel. He is offered to us as our King, as well as our Priest, and we cannot truly receive Him without receiving Him in both offices. It is a fatal error of the Papacy, and of its imitators among so-called Protestants, to disregard the interests of personal holiness, and to attempt to put God off with a ceremonial service, which would be despised if offered to themselves by their fellow-men. Holiness in His Church is the very end and purpose for which Jesus gave His body to be broken, and no man can be said "to discern" that body who does not feel this to be true. He may not be able to formulate, after the fashion of the theologians, this and other truths set forth in the Supper; but there will be a spontaneous and unreflective recognition of them. If Jesus, the holy, harmless, and undefiled One, did not die for the purpose of bring-

ing His redeemed into the likeness of Himself, then the Bible, the Church, the sacraments have all alike been given in vain. To be left to the corruption of our nature is to be left to the worm that never dies.